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Subject: Perspectives on Taiwan's partnership with Somaliland

Good morning,

As conversations about how best to support democracy promotion in Africa accelerate in advance of the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit, I am writing to share commentary about how Somaliland's partnerships with democratic nations – particularly with Taiwan – have provided a counterweight to autocracy in East Africa.

Somaliland has long admired Taiwan for its diligence in building a strong democracy and providing economic opportunities that serve the interests of its people. With this in mind, and in recognition of their similar experiences of seeking international recognition, Somaliland and Taiwan established representative offices in each other's capitals and initiatives to promote economic cooperation, facilitate educational exchanges, and advance public health.

Strengthening relations among democracies is vital to improving resilience against pressure from powers like China that seek one-sided relationships with African countries – often pursuing debt trap diplomacy and exploitation of natural resources – as opposed to relationships that are mutually beneficial.

In [The Wall Street Journal](#), reporter Michael Phillips notes:

"Few African regions have the nerve to say no to China, whose state-owned companies have blanketed the continent with sprawling seaports, sleek airport terminals, smooth highways—and soaring debts. Somaliland is one of the few, one of two remaining Taiwanese diplomatic outposts in sub-Saharan Africa."

Michael Horton, a fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, outlined in an [op-ed](#) in *Responsible Statecraft* how Somaliland has maintained its democratic ideals despite competing foreign interests in the Horn of Africa. He said:

"So far, Somaliland has tried — and largely succeeded — in pursuing a foreign policy that balances these competing interests. In July of 2020, its government agreed to exchange ambassadors with Taiwan in defiance of China. Going against the wishes of Beijing is rare among the most powerful nations and companies and rarer still among those with little power. Somaliland's decision was driven by its determination to continue to chart its own course and a desire to maintain good relations with the United States and the United Kingdom. Its current government, led by President Muse Bihi Abdi, could not be clearer about its desire for an abiding and mutually beneficial relationship with Washington."

Robert O'Brien, former United States National Security Adviser, published an [op-ed](#) in *The National Interest* arguing for greater U.S. engagement with Somaliland. He stated:

"When a developing nation stands up to China and rejects its tainted aid, the United States should make every effort to help it succeed, particularly in strategically vital geography."

Somaliland is one such country and deserves U.S. assistance... An American-backed independent Somaliland would show other nations that there is an alternative to China's Belt-and-Road initiative in East Africa."

We hope these perspectives provide helpful insight into Somaliland's unique relationship with Taiwan and interest in closer cooperation with countries that share its democratic values. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

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